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Criteria for Evaluating Instructional Materials: Kindergarten Through Grade Eight





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This chapter provides criteria for evaluating the alignment of instructional materials with the *Visual and Performing Arts Content Standards for California Public Schools*.¹ The content standards, which were adopted by the California State Board of Education in January 2001, describe what students should know and be able to do at each grade level. This updated *Visual and Performing Arts Framework* was adopted by the State Board of Education in January 2004. It incorporates the standards and instructional guidelines that together define the essential skills and knowledge in visual and performing arts that will enable all California students to enjoy a world-class education.

The instructional materials must provide guidance for the teacher to present the content standards and curriculum and teach the skills required at each grade level. These skills are to be learned through, and applied to, the content standards. Special attention should also be paid to the appendixes in the framework, which address important arts issues.

The following criteria will guide the development and govern the adoption cycle of instructional materials for kindergarten through grade eight beginning in 2006. They do not, however, require or recommend a particular pedagogical approach.

The five categories of the criteria are listed as follows:

1. **Visual and Performing Arts Content/Alignment with Standards:** The content specified in the *Visual and Performing Arts Content Standards for California Public Schools* (see Chapter 3)
2. **Program Organization:** The sequence and organization of the visual and performing arts program
3. **Assessment:** The strategies presented in the instructional materials for measuring what students know and are able to do

¹ *Visual and Performing Arts Content Standards for California Public Schools: Prekindergarten Through Grade Twelve*. Sacramento: California Department of Education, 2001.

4. **Universal Access:** The information and ideas that address the needs of every student, including those with diverse learning styles and abilities
5. **Instructional Planning and Support:** The information and materials, typically including a separate edition specifically designed for use by teachers, to assist teachers in implementing visual and performing arts programs

Because instructional materials in the visual and performing arts must support teaching aligned with the content standards, those failing to meet the criteria in category 1 will be considered unsatisfactory for adoption. Categories 2 through 5 must be considered as a whole, each set of materials being judged as a group. And the materials must also satisfy the requirements of categories 2 through 5 to be considered suitable for adoption.

Instructional materials should center on developing fully the content described in the standards. For efficient presentation extraneous content must be insignificant and not contrary to the standards. It must also not detract from the ability of teachers to teach readily and students to learn thoroughly the content specified in the standards.

Category 1

Visual and Performing Arts Content/Alignment with Standards

Instructional materials must support the teaching and learning of the content and skills required by a discipline at a grade level described in the standards. The numerical order of the criteria within each category does not imply the relative importance of the criteria.

To be considered suitable for adoption, instructional materials in the visual and performing arts must provide:

1. A full program that includes all the standards in one or more disciplines at one or more grade levels (There should be no reference to national standards or benchmarks or to any standards other than those contained in the *Visual and Performing Arts Content Standards for California Public Schools*.)
2. A list of evidence, with page numbers or other appropriate references, that demonstrates alignment with the standards (as detailed, discussed, and prioritized in Chapter 3 of the framework)
3. Topics or concepts, lessons, activities, examples, or illustrations, as appropriate, to support the content standards explicitly stated for the grade level(s) in the designated discipline(s) submitted



4. Accurate content, with examples based on current and confirmed research to support the teaching of the visual and performing arts
5. Opportunities for students to increase their knowledge of the visual and performing arts through their study of the historical development of artistic concepts and the lives, contributions, and innovations of certain artists, with all activities centered on the students understanding the standards
6. Opportunities for students to study the connections between the visual and performing arts disciplines to support an understanding of the designated content standards for dance, music, theatre, and the visual arts at various grade levels
7. Content presented in interesting and engaging ways to students
8. Terms and academic vocabulary appropriately used and accurately defined
9. Clear procedures and explanations of underlying concepts, principles, and theories integral to and supportive of the teaching and learning of art forms so that performance skills are learned in the context of specific content standards
10. Guidelines for formal and informal presentations of student work and other artwork focused on demonstrating the artistic elements and principles in the content area, thereby aiding meaningful learning
11. Examples for student work using readily available materials
12. Recommendations for reading and writing about the arts that are aligned with the appropriate grade-level English–language arts standards
13. Graphics (pictures, maps, charts) that are accurate, are well annotated or labeled, and enhance students' focus and understanding of the content

In addition, providers of instructional materials in the visual and performing arts are encouraged to:

- Reinforce, when appropriate, the grade-level-designated content standards for mathematics, science, history–social science, or English–language arts to explain relationships and solve problems
- Identify the key standards for each arts discipline when addressed
- Examine the contributions of the arts to the larger culture and their effects on society



- Discuss the contributions of contemporary media artwork, processes, and concepts and their effects on the arts disciplines
- Make use of electronic resources that add richness and depth of understanding to the standards being taught

Category 2

Program Organization

The organization of the visual and performing arts program structures sequentially what students should learn each year and allows teachers to convey the content efficiently and effectively, thereby providing students with opportunities to achieve the knowledge and skills described in the standards. The content also reflects the variety of instructional models, staffing, and facilities at a given school site.

To be considered suitable for adoption, instructional materials in the visual and performing arts must provide:

1. Introduction of new concepts at a reasonable pace and with depth of coverage, with the explicit aim of preparing students to master content at each grade level so that they can advance to the next level
2. A variety of experiences, problems, applications, and independent practices that organize the appropriate grade-level content in a logical, systematic way so that prerequisite skills and knowledge can be developed before the introduction of the more complex concepts, principles, and theories that depend on them
3. A well-organized structure providing students with opportunities to understand artistic concepts, principles, and theories and building on a foundation of facts, skills, and inquiry
4. A logical, coherent, and sequential organizational structure that facilitates efficient and effective teaching and learning in a lesson, unit, and year aligned with the standards
5. Clearly stated student outcomes and goals that are measurable and are based on the content standards
6. An overview of the content in each chapter or unit that outlines the visual and performing arts concepts and skills to be developed
7. Guidelines for a safe environment or facility appropriate to the level of physical performance and training difficulty called for in the arts curriculum
8. Tables of contents, indexes, glossaries, electronic-based resources, support materials, content summaries, and assessment guides designed to help teachers, parents or guardians, and students navigate the program

In addition, providers of instructional materials in the visual and performing arts are encouraged to include:

- Guidelines for the implementation of the instructional content within disciplines that reflect general or specialized facilities, various staff expertise, or a range of school resources
- A standards-based curriculum that includes contemporary media technologies or uniquely organized resources that support universal access to information and enhance teaching and learning in the arts
- Delivery of instructional program or units through alternative formats or methods, including but not limited to videos, interactive media, CD-ROMs, DVDs, and online resources, to facilitate ease of duplication and distribution or provide support for universal access

Category 3

Assessment

Instructional materials should contain multiple measures to assess what students know and can do in the visual and performing arts. The measures should reveal students' knowledge of the concepts, principles, theories, and skills related to those arts and students' ability to apply that knowledge to understanding advanced versions of those concepts, principles, and theories. Assessment tools that are part of the instructional material should provide evidence of students' progress in meeting the content standards and useful information for planning and modifying instruction to help all students meet or exceed those standards.

To be considered suitable for adoption, instructional materials in the visual and performing arts must provide:

1. Strategies and tools reflecting the assessment guidelines presented in Chapter 5 (entry-level assessment, progress monitoring, summative evaluation)
2. Multiple measures of individual student progress at regular intervals to evaluate grade-level mastery of the standards
3. Guiding questions to monitor student understanding of the arts

In addition, providers of instructional materials in the visual and performing arts are encouraged to include:

- Suggestions for methods by which a student's work can be compared over time (e.g., portfolios, presentations, performances, journals, CDs)
- Electronic tools providing data for diagnostic purposes and user-friendly features, such as help windows, navigation bars, and font and color conformity across platforms, that are easy to install

Category 4

Universal Access

Instructional materials should provide access to the standards-based curriculum for all students, including those with diverse learning styles and abilities. In addition, programs must conform to the policies of the State Board of Education and other applicable state and federal guidelines pertaining to diverse populations and special education.

To be considered suitable for adoption, instructional materials in the visual and performing arts must provide:

1. Suggestions for adapting curriculum and instruction to meet students' diverse learning styles and abilities according to current and confirmed research
2. Strategies to help students who are below grade level in the visual and performing arts standards
3. Strategies to help students reading below grade level understand the visual and performing arts content
4. Suggestions that allow advanced learners to study standards-based content in greater depth

In addition, providers of instructional materials in the visual and performing arts are encouraged to include:

- Lesson materials optimizing clear presentation and focus on students
- Electronic tools aligned with industry standards for universal access (including text and audio enhancement) and multiple levels of difficulty that can be adjusted by the teacher or student

Category 5

Instructional Planning and Support

Teacher-support materials built into the instructional materials should specify suggestions and illustrative examples of how teachers can implement a standards-based visual and performing arts program. That assistance should be designed to help the teacher implement the program to ensure that all students have opportunities to learn the essential knowledge and skills called for by the standards. Because the criteria do not recommend or require a particular pedagogical approach, the materials should contain recommendations to teachers regarding those approaches that best fit instructional goals. Accordingly, the materials should offer a variety of instructional approaches that might include but are not limited to direct instruction, reading, writing, demonstrations, creation of artwork, and Internet use and inquiry.

To be considered suitable for adoption, instructional materials in the visual and performing arts must provide:

1. Explicit, systematic, and accurate procedures and prompts; explanations of background, concepts, and principles; and theories understandable to specialists, credentialed arts teachers, and general classroom teachers
2. Strategies to identify and correct common student misconceptions of the visual and performing arts concepts
3. A variety of effective teaching strategies for flexible implementation
4. Lesson plans that reflect properly sequenced instruction with appropriate procedures understandable to specialists, credentialed arts teachers, and general classroom teachers
5. A number of possible strategies for pacing lessons
6. Suggestions for applying student assessment data to instructional planning within the program
7. Resources reflecting strategies found successful in engaging all students in full participation, varied thinking, and meaning-centered tasks
8. A list of suggested equipment, supplies, and facilities supporting implementation of a standards-based program
9. Guidelines to ensure classroom safety and effective use and care of required equipment, materials, and supplies called for by the program during instruction and demonstrations
10. Suggestions for organizing and storing resources in the classroom
11. Economical equipment and supplies together with recommendations for their use (included with the materials) or recommendations for using readily available alternative materials and equipment
12. The program packaged for sale containing all components, including reproducible masters, needed for helping students meet the state requirements
13. A plan for professional development and continuing technical support for users of the materials in implementing the program
14. Technical support and suggestions for the appropriate use of instruments, tools, and equipment as well as audiovisual, multimedia, and information technology resources associated with the program

In addition, providers of instructional materials in the visual and performing arts are encouraged to include:

- Suggestions for using community resources to support the program
- References and resources providing teachers with further information on the visual and performing arts content
- Suggestions to students for exploring the content in the standards at great depth

- Support materials that reinforce, model, and demonstrate effective teaching strategies for teacher use (e.g., video of demonstration lessons, simulations, online resources)
- Homework assignments and periodic letters to the home encouraging student learning and presented so that parents or guardians can easily support their child's academic success.
- Suggestions for informing parents or guardians and the community about the visual and performing arts program
- Electronic tools, including lesson-plan builders, teacher presentations, and technical and implementation support
- Electronic resources promoting interaction of teachers and students and critical thinking, such as presentations with designated points for discussion, interactive simulations, role playing, and multiuse systems

Alternative Delivery Systems

New media and electronic technology are shaping artistic expression by introducing new systems, materials, and processes. More than simply replicating text-based materials in an electronic format, use of the new media involves expressing ideas and creating artwork in unique ways that are not possible without the use of technology. For example, it allows for the replication and changing of images, and the use of those images becomes a new medium of expression. This new and evolving area within the arts serves as a vehicle for creating and communicating aesthetic ideas, enhancing access to artistic media and information, and extending opportunities for instruction, critiques, reflections, and assessments. New media and electronic technology are changing arts education by encouraging teachers and students to employ these new modes of expression and materials in creating artwork.

To be considered suitable for adoption, instructional materials incorporating new media and electronic technology must provide:

1. A standards-based curriculum that includes contemporary media technologies or uniquely organized resources supporting universal access to information and enhancing teaching and learning in the arts
2. Delivery of an instructional program or units through alternative formats or methods, including but not limited to videos, interactive media, CD-ROMs, DVDs, and online resources
3. Technical support and suggestions for the appropriate use of the instruments, tools, and equipment as well as the audiovisual, multimedia, and information technology resources associated with the program
4. Electronic resources promoting interaction of teachers and students and critical thinking, such as presentations featuring role playing or multiuse systems
5. Electronic resources that are cross-platform (e.g., using both Windows and Macintosh operating systems) and use available media systems